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 orig SALT

# Rowland Evans and Robert Novak The Counterattack For SALT II

Cheered on by the White House, Sen. John Culver (D-Iowa) charged into a Senate Armed Services subcommittee hearing Nov. 7 to lead a counteroffensive aimed at the biggest threat to Senate approval of a new U.S.-Soviet arms-control agreement: subcommittee chairman Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.).

Culver delivered a tirade charging that leaks from the subcommittee were undermining the strategic arms limitation talks, strongly implying the leaks came from Jackson and his staff. Jackson, bending perceptibly under Culver's verbal barrage, expressed regret about the disclosures. That heightened concern by Republicans that Jackson ultimately will prove more Democrat than hawk and put party over principle.

If so, the SALT II treaty nearing agreement will win the two-thirds Senate approval needed for ratification. If Jackson opposes it, however, chances are poor. Thus, at age 65, Scoop Jackson holds the course of history in his hands.

There is no doubt about Jackson's expertise on arms control or his conviction that the new treaty dangerously widens the Soviet strategic advantage. The doubt has been whether he would treat Secretary of State Cyrus Vance as harshly as he did Henry Kissinger, risking the end of invitations to the Jacksons for family dinners at the White House.

Those doubts faded recently when Jackson conducted tough hearings with an uncomfortable, ill-prepared Vance as witness. To counteract these hearings, all 100 senators were invited to top-secret briefings on SALT from some eight administration officials on Nov. 3; only seven senators showed up.

With Senate prospects fading, the counteroffensive began. The theme: SALT critics are undermining U.S.-Soviet negotiations. Former Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Nitze came under special attack for his scholarly analysis of the adverse effect on U.S. security of the SALT II agreements.

Actually, tentative SALT II agreements have been leaked mainly by administration officials. But this did not stop Sen. George McGovern (D-S.D.) from taking the Senate floor Nov. 2 to accuse Nitze of "inexcusable conduct." On the same day, arms-control activist Jeremy Stone (who is secretary of the Federation of American Scientists) wrote a letter suggesting Nitze's analysis is "subversive" and constitutes "sabotage" of SALT.

The counteroffensive accelerated Nov. 4 when our column reported Vance's inability to defend the SALT II agreements to the Jackson subcommittee. The normally placid Vance was incensed. Backing down as he never had against Kissinger, Jackson apologized

and agreed to long-standing State Department requests to inspect transcripts of Vance's testimony.

When Vance re-appeared before the Jackson subcommittee in closed session Nov. 7, Culver—a member of the full committee but not the subcommittee—made his presence felt. Finishing his third year in the Senate, Culver has become a force to contend with and the most effective instrument of the arms-control lobby. A former Harvard football player, he possesses a bulk and stentorian voice that prove intimidating to some colleagues.

Glaring down at Jackson aide Richard Perle, Culver shouted about a "hemorrhage" of secrets in our column (though they actually contain no classified information). Jackson replied quietly that most SALT II details were being dribbled out by the administration, but Culver brushed that aside. He demanded an investigation of leaks from the Jackson subcommittee. The aim is obvious: Get Sen. John Stennis (D-Miss.), chairman of the full Armed Services Committee and a man who lives in horror of leaks, to shut down Jackson.

Culver's line that leaks threaten SALT not only duplicates that of McGovern and Jeremy Stone, but also echoes what is said inside the Carter administration. Culver issued a statement to us denying his move was inspired by the administration, but that may be academic. "Thank goodness for John Culver," a senior White House aide told us. "It's about time somebody stopped Jackson from running wild."

Jackson's reaction was not reassuring to his Republican allies on the committee. Although neither he nor his staff had given us the information about Vance's appearance, he felt he must express "regret" about our column. At a joint press conference with Vance, he felt constrained to call our report "inaccurate and misleading," though he knew its accuracy had caused all the furor.

To some old hands, this recalled 1963, when Jackson first criticized the U.S.-Soviet test-ban treaty, then backed it following pressure from the Kennedy White House. But far more is at stake for U.S. security now, and Jackson is an older man with few political ambitions. How he reacts to the counterattack, clearly blessed by the White House, will probably determine the fate of SALT II.